

# **Congressman J. Randy Forbes**

Virginia's Fourth Congressional District

## **History of Regulations Regarding Military Chaplains**

- July 29, 1775** Chaplains recognized as part of the United States military organization as noted by the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War.
- July 1, 1999** Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 52-1 issued, updating AFPD 52-1 from September 7, 1993.
- October 12, 2000** Secretary of the Navy Instruction (SECNAVINST) 1730.7B issued, updating SECNAVINST 1730.7A from September 2, 1993.
- 2004 – 2005** Air Force became subject of suits filed in federal court regarding alleged proselytizing of military leaders in general.
- August 30, 2005** Air Force issued “INTERIM GUIDELINES CONCERNING FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION IN THE AIR FORCE”, a reactive regulation which significantly broadens the scope of religious regulation on military chaplains specifically. The regulation stated that prayer outside of religious services should be non-sectarian in nature. Many chaplains viewed these regulations as an infringement on their right to freedom of religious and alleged that prayers were edited by commanders.
- October 25, 2005** Members of Congress wrote to President Bush on military chaplain issue asking that the President protect the right of all chaplains to pray through Executive Order.
- February 9, 2006** Revised Air Force guidance issued, easing the initial guidance that was issued in late 2005. New language, nevertheless, recommended the use of non-sectarian prayers outside of religious services.
- February 21, 2006** Navy issued new policy guidance, SECNAVINST 1730.7C, regarding chaplains and prayer. These regulations also recommended the use of non-sectarian prayers outside of religious services, but go even further by allowing a commander to restrict the nature of the prayer in any command function.
- May 11, 2006** The House of Representatives passed language in Sec 590 of HR 5122 (the National Defense Authorization Act), to allow a military chaplain to pray according to the chaplain's beliefs, except as limited by military necessity. Language designed to reverse the Air Force and Navy regulations and revert to 1999 and 2000 regulations allowing chaplains to operate as they had over 200 years.
- September 2006** Senate refused to accept House language from Sec 590 of HR 5122 regarding chaplains.
- House Proposal** To direct the Secretary of the Air Force and the Secretary of the Navy to revert regulations on military chaplains to AFPD 52-1 issued on July 1, 1999 and SECNAVINST 1730.7B issued on October 12, 2000.  
*Adopted September 29, 2006*